



Cyclosporiasis

What is cyclosporiasis?

Cyclosporiasis is a diarrheal illness caused by a single-celled parasite called *Cyclospora cayetanensis*.

What are the symptoms of cyclosporiasis?

Cyclospora typically causes watery diarrhea. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever, and fatigue. Symptoms may last from several days to several weeks, and weight loss can be significant (exceeding 20 pounds in some cases). Some infected persons may not have any symptoms.

Who gets cyclosporiasis?

Persons of all ages are at risk of infection. Cyclosporiasis occurs worldwide including the United States. However, it occurs more often among persons living or traveling in developing countries. Cyclosporiasis has been associated with diarrhea in travelers to Asia, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Peru. Eating imported produce has also been linked to cyclosporiasis.

How is cyclosporiasis spread?

The parasite is not transmitted person to person. Humans become sick by eating food or drinking water with *Cyclospora*. The food and water become dirty when fecal matter from ill people comes in contact with the items you eat/drink.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

The incubation period for cyclosporiasis ranges from one to two weeks.

How long can an infected person spread the parasite?

People may shed *Cyclospora* from days to more than one month while experiencing diarrhea. It is not known how long the parasite may be shed after symptoms have stopped.

Should people sick with cyclosporiasis stay home from work, school, or day care?

If a person is employed as a food handler, works in a day care center, or has direct contact with ill persons or the elderly, they must not work until 24 hours after their diarrhea has stopped. Children with diarrhea should not attend a day care center until 24 hours after the diarrhea has stopped.

What is the treatment for cyclosporiasis?

Specific antibiotics called Bactrim or Septra (trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole) prescribed by a physician is the recommended treatment for cyclosporiasis. Persons should also rest and drink plenty of fluids.

What can be done to prevent a *Cyclospora* infection?

The best way to prevent infection is to:

- Avoid water and food that may be contaminated with stool.
- Persons experiencing diarrhea should wash their hands often to prevent the spread of infection.
- Avoid drinking water that has not been boiled when hiking and traveling in developing countries. Bringing water to a full, rolling boil is sufficient to kill *Cyclospora* in drinking water.
- Thoroughly wash all fresh fruits and vegetables prior to consumption.